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*Srinagar and its Environs*

*Pahalgam and its Environs*

*Mysterious Cave of Amar Nath*

*Mysterious Spring of Khirbhawani*

*Rahas Amar Nath Gupha (Hindi)*

# GULMARG AND ITS ENVIRONS

BY

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*Birds of Kashmir*

*Beautiful Valleys of Kashmir and Ladakh, etc., etc.*

*Fourth edition*

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ENVIRONS  
GULFWARD AND ITS



## PREFACE

VERY little was known about the interior of Gulmarg which is one of the charming health resorts of the Kashmir Himalayas. The flora and fauna, the interesting spots were unveiled in the first edition which was very kindly revised by Lt.-Col. B. T. Phillips. The map of the place was drawn by Shri Mohan Lal Raina, artist, and the pictures supplied by Capt. W. B. Bakewell, Messrs Mahatta & Co. Ltd., Srinagar.

In the second edition an account of the out-of-reach sacred lakelet on the top of a mountain south of Apharwat was added.

The errors which had eluded scrutiny in the earlier editions have been corrected in the present edition.

To all these persons who helped me in the production of the book, I am grateful.

*Motiyar, Rainawari*  
*Srinagar, Kashmir*  
*January 1958*

S. C. KOUL

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Fourth edition with slight insertions here and there.  
*February 1964*

S.C.K.

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Edinburgh, January 1905.  
 George G. Kohn.

Fourth edition with slight alterations here and there.  
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## GULMARG

The mountains round the vale of Kashmir are densely covered with forests. The southern aspects of the range are generally clothed with *Indigofera hereantha*. Witch-hazel, Raspberry, Barberry and other bushes while the deciduous belt of the northern slopes consists mainly of Sycamore, Wild Walnut, Chestnut, Mulberry and Hazel. These trees usually support an undergrowth of Guelder and Witch-hazel while those growing profusely in the coniferous belt show a preponderance of *Skimmia laureola*. These bush-covered slopes are the haunts of many species of most interesting birds, a host of Warblers and Bush Chats attract constant attention, while the more secretive Laughing Thrushes and Shortwings will be noticed lurking in the dense undergrowth.

The pine- and fir-covered mountains contain a large number of glades which are either forest clearings clothed in grass, affording temporary grazing grounds for the sheep and cattle brought up from lower levels by shepherds on their way to permanent summer grazing grounds above the tree line, or the outcome of glacial action and avalanches which have wrecked the forest area and left behind rocky moraines. Most of these glades are but narrow strips bordered by pine and fir forests, and often form excellent camping sites affording cool shade and refreshing breezes.

Gulmarg is one of the most delightful health resorts of Kashmir. Pathankot is the nearest railway station to Jammu. From here one can take a bus to Srinagar via Jammu. It crosses the Jawahir Tunnel which is a wonderful piece of engineering skill. The drive beyond the tunnel is through verdant rice-fields, poplar avenues, willow groves and along the serpentine course of the Vetasta (Jhelum) till Srinagar



is reached. There are comfortable hotels and houseboats where one can stay. A bus runs daily during summer months to Gulmarg.

At Mile-stone 9 from Srinagar, at Narabal the Tangamarg Road leaves the main high road and branches off in a southerly direction to its terminus at Tangamarg, 15 miles distant, having run through extensive rice-fields and a mile long avenue of poplars.

Tangamarg (7,400 ft.) is the terminus for wheeled traffic and from here the visitor begins his ascent across pine-covered slopes along the narrow unmetalled road leading to the Gap (8,500 ft.) from which Gulmarg is viewed. There is a police station, veterinary hospital, a telephone service and a physical research laboratory.

Its congenial climate has induced the Government to establish a sanatorium for T.B. patients. It is from here that the deciduous forests give way to the coniferous belt. A picturesque vista carries the eye up to the source of the Ferozpor Nálláh from the spot where it debouches into the open to drain the fertile valley where the landscape presents a picture of fields of maize, with their undergrowth of beans and poppies, flooded rice fields, and, also studded about the area, Gujar huts now almost obscured by the rapidly growing pumpkin creepers. Gaudy Rollers, Bee-eaters and the Rufous-backed Shrike add a further touch of colour to the scene by using the telegraph wires as vantage-points. On arrival the visitor is mobbed by a rabble of coolies, pony-men and dándiwállás, and in consequence one's baggage is soon under way, and having chosen for oneself the desired mode of conveyance, the 1,500 ft. climb begins along a road which winds about pine and spruce-covered slopes until eventually it emerges on to the Marg, some three miles further on. An alternative route commonly known as the 'Coolie track' is much shorter but involves a steep climb

until the Gulmarg Bázár is reached. As one proceeds higher and higher vegetation becomes denser and some of the following species of flowers are bound to attract attention: the *Strobilanthes alatus* has dark blue flowers, with heart-shaped, sharp-toothed leaves. *Phytolacca acinosa*, with a greenish-white flower growing out of a short, stout, erect raceme at the top of the stem and has leaves alternate and elliptic, which can be eaten when boiled. It is known by the name of 'Kafal'.

A large variety of pink-flowering Balsam is also found, Edelweiss, *Stellaria*, Dock and Stinging Nettle are plentiful, while our crops of *Viburnum nervosum*, *Skimmia laureola* and Witch-hazel are scattered about the forest. The leaves of *Skimmia laureola* are fragrant and from them oil can be extracted, and when roasted these leaves give relief when applied to burns; in winter they serve as flowers for worship. The hard wood of the Witch-hazel, locally known as 'Hatab', provides the best known wood in Kashmir for fires.

*Viburnum* flowers early in March, while Milfoil, Wild Strawberry and St John's Wort are ubiquitous. Tussocks of a grass, called Grin, poisonous to cattle, are scattered over the slopes.

The noisy Nutcracker will be seen and heard as it moves about the pine tops; Tits, Nuthatches and Flycatchers in their variety will impose themselves on the passer-by.

Just before reaching the Gap, the Outer Circular Walk is crossed, and as its name infers, it circles the Marg. It is seven miles in length, practically level throughout, and runs through the pine forests affording fine views of Nanga Parbat, the 26,660 ft. massif 85 miles across the vale to the north, Harmoukh, 16,890 ft., only half that distance out in the east, and also the uplands to the south which rise up to the rugged Ferozpor and Sunset Peaks (Romesh Thong) and Apharwat Ridge. Leopard's Valley, a fine, broad, grassy



glade, is bordered by the walk along the western part of its circumference.

Gulmarg (8,659 ft.) must have been known to the inhabitants of the valley from time immemorial, owing to the fact that a lake lying to the west of Apharwat is dedicated to the serpent god Ailapatör, a satellite of Shiva; and pilgrims must have passed over it on their way to visit the sacred lake.

There are a number of versions indicating the origin of the name Gulmarg. There is a popular idea that in the dim ages the god Shiva graced the Marg and its environments and installed his seat on the top of the mountain opposite Apharwat alongside the Nila Kant Spring, now corruptly called Kantar Nág, and that he dedicated the valley to his consort Gauri, naming it Gauri Marg after her. There are other names in their corrupted form to show that this area was believed to have been occupied by this deity and his family, viz., the forest area round the Ferozpor Nálláh known as Goirwan, which should be Gauriwan (Gauri's Forest). A pleasant camping site on the right bank of the stream near Drang called Náyak Sahib should really be Vaynáik Sahib, the son of Gauri.

The present name Gulmarg (Flower Meadow) was apparently given to it by Yusuf Shah, the Tsak ruler of Kashmir, after his visit in 1580.

Whatever the origin of the name may be, it is one of the loveliest margs in Kashmir and within easy reach of the main valley.

From the Gap, the Marg is viewed, spread out like an emerald-bowl fringed by the dark-green jade of the coniferous trees. Numerous trim roads quarter its velvety turf. Two hillocks in the heart of the Marg give prominence to St. Mary's Church and Nedou's Hotel; the many residential huts are tucked away and nestle among the pine-covered slopes surrounding the Marg. There is the well laid out

bázár, amply stocked not only with the necessities of life, but, through agents from all the big business houses, every thing procurable in Srinagar may be purchased there. During the Kabali invasion of October 1847, the bázár was set on fire, the houses were plundered of their furniture and arson, murder was committed by the invaders. It is partially restored now.

It is a great holiday resort with the Gulmarg Club as the hub of the universe, and the meeting place of many a long lost friend. Its whole life centres on the two very well laid out golf courses on which competitions run riot throughout the season. The original course was laid out by Lt.-Colonel Neville Chamberlain in 1890 but not completed until 1902. Even rabbits and children are not forgotten : each have well kept courses reserved for them.

The season officially commences from 1st May and continues till 15th of October, as by that date the surrounding mountains are beginning to have their first fall of snow. During the summer months, the densely forested area around the Marg creates cool strata of atmosphere, causing the moisture-laden winds rising up from the vale to condense and precipitate fairly constant storms of rain, especially so during July and August.

The high altitude Cosmic Ray Laboratory here has been fully established. It will be linked to the high level laboratory at Apharwat peak by means of Ropeways.

The base Laboratory has been equipped with the latest scientific instruments necessary for high altitude scientific research. It will be one of the biggest Cosmic Ray Research Centres in Asia.

The Ski Club of India holds two meetings, of a fortnight's duration each, during the Christmas holiday season and again in March. The variety of ample snow-covered slopes, on Apharwat, Khellan Marg and, for the novice, close to the

Hotel grounds, provide playgrounds for expert and novice alike. Nedou's Hotel furnishing the accommodation and wherewithal to ensure a pleasant holiday for the overflow of Ski Club members unable to be housed in the Club Hut on Khellan Marg.

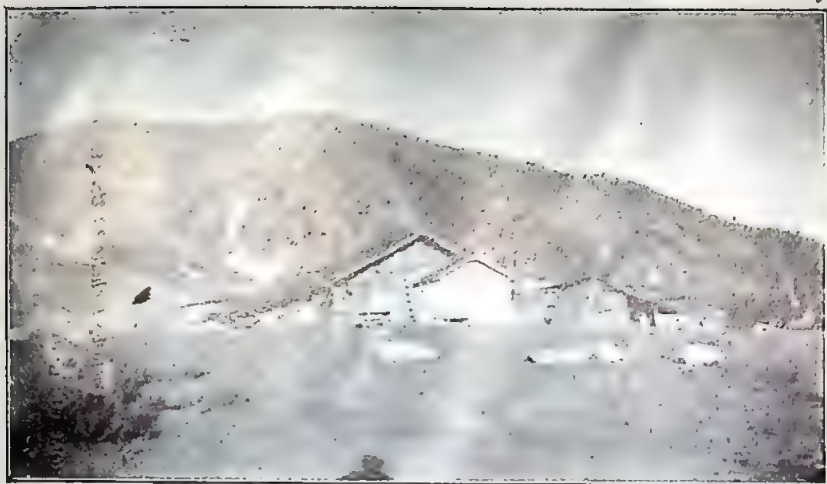
There are many worthwhile day excursions within easy reach of the Marg. A pony and a picnic-basket are all that is necessary to make certain of a day's outing through the cool health-giving atmosphere which is guaranteed to delight the wanderer whether he or she be interested in picturesque mountain scenery, flowers or birds.

Descriptions of suggested outings are given below.

### 1. *KHELLAN MARG*

The word Khellan should read Phollun, meaning bloom, a name more suited to an area so well carpeted by an abundance of plant life and colourful flowers. A pony track straggles up under shady spruce, fir and apple trees and it will take the visitor about forty minutes to reach the edge of the Marg. The red-berried bushes of *Skimmia laureola* are abundant by the wayside; while Wild Strawberry covers the open spaces, *Salvia hians* and patches of Forget-me-not peep from under the fallen and rotting tree trunks. In the vicinity of the fast-flowing, sparkling stream, *Caltha palustris* and Stunted Geranium are profuse, nor can Jacob's Ladder and Maiden-hair fern be missed. Three varieties of *Primula*, *denticulata*, *rosea* and *nivalis*, are early flowering gems which have already paid their tribute of colour to nature; clusters of radical leaves indicate their position at this time. The striking *Arisaema* with trifoliate leaf, commonly known as Serpent Grass owing to the shape resembling the head of a cobra with tongue protruding, is to be found below the edge of the Marg; there are two varieties of this plant, the





**SKI-CLUB HUT AT KHELLAN MARG**

**In the background is Apharwat**



**HOLIDAY-MAKERS ON THE SHORE OF AILAPATOR LAKE (12,285)**

**Note the snow-bergs on the lake**



*Photo by Mahatta & Co. Ltd., Srinagar*

**VIEW OF GULMARG FACING WEST FROM THE GAP**

one entirely green, the other dark purple and green, the latter producing a realistic imitation of that deadly serpent. The root is a tuber with medicinal properties, as when it is dried, powdered and mixed with vaselin it gives relief when applied to boils and is said to be soothing in cases of cancer.

Birds are ubiquitous and very busy in this forest area during the summer months, and being mostly insectivorous may be seen as they sally forth in chase of their insect prey. That quaint mouse-like little bird, the Tree-Creeper, may be seen making its way up a tree trunk, seemingly finding a dainty morsel in every crack in the bark. Though inconspicuous against the trunk, its jerky movements and habit of constantly flying down to the base of the next chosen tree in order to continue its day-long search for insects, dubs it as a common bird in these parts. The noise of tappings from other trees will attract attention to Pied Woodpeckers, as they busy themselves in efforts to dislodge, from under the bark, lurking insects which are chiefly those injurious to trees. The Minivet, trim in his scarlet and black, will surely be seen with his mate in her gold and green plumage as they manœuvre about the tree tops. The Crested Black Tit, several species of Flycatchers, Goldcrests and the raucous Nutcrackers are but a few among the hosts that favour the pines, while the undergrowth forms the haunt of skulkers, among which may be named the Streaked Laughing Thrush, Hodgson's Shortwings, Red-flanked Bush Robin and Bush-chats. The attractive coo of the Turtle Dove vies with that well-known call, 'Cuckoo' and echoes from all directions. The area does form a veritable paradise for the bird-lovers.

Khellan Marg covers an area a mile in length by 400 yards in breadth and is divided into West Khellan or Khorihun and East Khellan or Bangil by the reserved catchment area which forms Gulmarg's piped water supply. The Marg itself is covered with tussocks of Euphorbia and



scattered over with outcrops of *Anemone* and *Fritellaria Royleana*. The Catchment basin, to which entry is prohibited, is in consequence rich in flowers.

Piped drinking water may be had from a spring guarded in its cement casing and situated in the centre of the Marg. A tea-stall established during the season near the spring provides light refreshment and shelter from rain storms. A few Gujar huts belong to the shepherds using this fairly extensive grazing ground.

The Ski Club of India has a well appointed hut here, made for the benefit of its members, and provides beds and hammocks. There is separate accommodation for ladies. Accommodation in this hut is at a premium during the Christmas and Spring meetings. The original hut was destroyed by an avalanche in April 1936, when three British officers lost their lives. The present hut built on a nearby site was completed in September 1936, under the supervision of the C.M.S. Technical School. It is a sturdily built structure buttressed to withstand great pressure from wind, snow or avalanches. The present President of the Club is Brigadier Mangat Rai and Capt. W. B. Bakewell is the Honorary Secretary.

A remarkable panorama of an extensive strip of the inner Himalayan Range can be viewed from here. In the north stands the colossal peak of Nanga Parbat (26,660 ft.), to the east rises the massive peak of Harmoukh (16,890 ft.) overlooking the Sind Valley; Mahadiv (13,013 ft.) is the conspicuous peak guarding the city of Srinagar, while further east Kolahoi (17,779 ft.) also known as Gwāshi Brōri, rears her haughty head over the Liddar Valley, and is the home of the marmot. Still farther to the east the grim peaks of Nun Khun (23,400 ft.) rear their noble heads over the Suru Valley, and finally towards the south-east may be seen the trinity peaks of Brahma-Shakri (over 15,000 ft. in height).

These latter are seen from the plains of India. The shimmering surface of the Wular, Anchár and Dal Lakes, the yellow alluvial plateaus encircled in green cultivation, the isolated hill of Hári Parbat and the temple-crested mount of (Shankeráchária hill) all go to present an unrivalled scene to the spectator. Under one's feet Gulmarg's hamlets show up as though embossed in emerald and fringed by the green jade of the surrounding pine-covered slopes.

## 2. *THE FROZEN LAKE*

Although in reality a misnomer, as the lakes and tarns dotted about in the Apharwat area are seldom ice-bound from early July until the winter sets in again, yet the name commonly used, 'Frozen Lakes', has an enticing attraction for visitors. There are however grounds for a further interest to be added to the trip for one of these lakes, Ailapatör, is the mythical home of the snake-god, Ailapatör a satellite of Shiva. Its waters are revered by Mussalmáns and Hindus alike, as well as giving source to much superstitious dread among the local hillmen. It is said that all the miniature tarns in the neighbourhood are connected with this lake.

Till comparatively recent times this trip was in fact a very strenuous day's outing, as all three routes to the lakes involved a good deal of steep walking at a fairly high altitude. Since the completion of the well graded pony track which zigzags up to the crest of the Apharwat Ridge via Khellan Marg, this has become the most favoured route now, as the outing can be made in comparative comfort by pony, or even dandi.

Until this improvement of the alternative routes; the one via Ningle Nálláh (5 miles east of Gulmarg) along the gradual and ridable ascent to the western shoulder of the ridge was then preferred, as although the longest in distance (14 miles) it was considered the least arduous. The other

route, which leads over the eastern shoulder of the ridge, begins as a shepherd track and skirting the Catchment area passes through West Khellan (Chota Khellan) to its junction with the old Punch Road. This road, now in disuse, has become boulder-strewn and in consequence impracticable along much of its length for riding ponies.

The route via Khellan Marg is recommended, as though the terrain is steep from the far edge of the Marg, the zigzag track makes going easy even for the pedestrian. As the ascent continues, the pines thin out and become replaced by gnarled weather-beaten Silver Birch, Alder, Stunted Juniper and Rhododendron anthopogon; these appear to retain precarious footholds against the might of wind and weather. These barren uplands are none the less studded with many species of alpine flowers which bloom in due season.

*Geum elatum* and *Potentilla argrophylla* and occasionally *Pedicularis bicarnuta* grow about the track. The scented and medicinal herb, *Jurinea macrocephala*, can be recognized by its ashy radical leaves which are deeply lobed; the root when mixed with other sweet scented drugs is burnt as incense, and also, quoting Dr. Stewart, 'The bruised root is applied to eruptions and decoction is given in colic. It is also considered a cordial and given in puerperal fevers.'

Bird life does not cease, but except for a handful of species seen at lower altitudes viz., that black robber the Jungle Crow, a gate-crasher at all picnic lunches whatever the altitude, a hovering Kestrel in search of voles and mice, and the Himalayan Griffon Vulture sailing majestically through the air, and seen making height and rising higher than the highest peaks by the use of every available air current in its effortless flight, an entire new set of species choose these alpine slopes as their summer habitat. The Central Asian Blackbird, two species of Warblers, a Ruby Throat, a Hedgesparrow and the Blue-fronted Redstart all



breed in the bushes, while a host of Hodgson's Pipit, Adam's Mountain Finch and even the Horned Lark are to be found resting on the ground above the tree line.

The rarer atmosphere at these heights and the increased actinic power of the sun-rays are certainly tiresome during the outing. The use of sunglasses can remedy the effects of the glare but breathlessness will continue. It does not infer unfitness as it is common even to mountaineers at this altitude. It must also be noted that sudden storms of the thunder and deluge variety are common to these uplands.

A Kashmiri proverb may be quoted here in this paragraph as an advise: *Pakanas gatsi àsun takun* (walking must have chewing); so remember to stock the lunch basket with a goodly sufficiency to help appease a ravenous appetite produced by the vigorous climb through rarified atmosphere. As the limit of the tree line will be passed, no fuel is available to help boil up the water for a refreshing cup of tea; a supply of wood should be carried up from the lower levels.

Should the day be fine, a more extensive view of the mighty Himálayas will be seen as one rests on the crest, and the birds-eye-view to the north and the east accentuating the peaks already seen, Nanga Parbat and Brahma Shakri, will have added to it a 'close up' view of the isolated peak of Nashukri (14,270 ft.) or Hángal-Heng, and in the distance the peaks and glades of Toṣa Maidán that now become visible to the south, while to the west, the maze of grass-covered hillocks stretch away as far as Poonch.

On reaching the crest as seen from Gulmarg, this will be found not to be the real summit of Apharwat (14,800 ft.) as that stands a mile back from this ridge. From this point there is no necessity to either ascend or descend, as by holding a level course and turning slightly right and gradually curving round, grassy patches may be used to escape the boulder-strewn areas. The lake lies nestling in a hollow

under the shady screen of Apharwat and cannot be seen until a shoulder is reached when a sight of the sheet of its turquoise-blue waters will be obtained; this brings the healthily tired visitor to his destination.

An early visit to this area is inadvisable for those not versed in mountain-craft, as broad tongues of slippery frozen snow traverse the track and can be dangerous to life and limb. In normal years, from mid-June to the end of the season is considered to be the most suitable time for this excursion. It is in early July that the melting snow coming down from the slopes, together with remnants of the winter snowbergs, help to raise the level of the water, but by evaporation and seepage an island of debris appears in the centre in August.

The might of Nature, as shown by the power of frost and ice and the ease with which these rocks are powdered to pebbles by its action, presents a picture of both dreariness and beatitude to the insignificant onlooker down on this scene from the shingly margin of the lake and it gives food for much thought. Man's conflict with wrong and his appreciation of things beautiful have formed, from times immemorial, difficult problems to solve, but by the aid of the Almighty Grace and Power victory is assured when selfishness is cast aside and the seeker becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

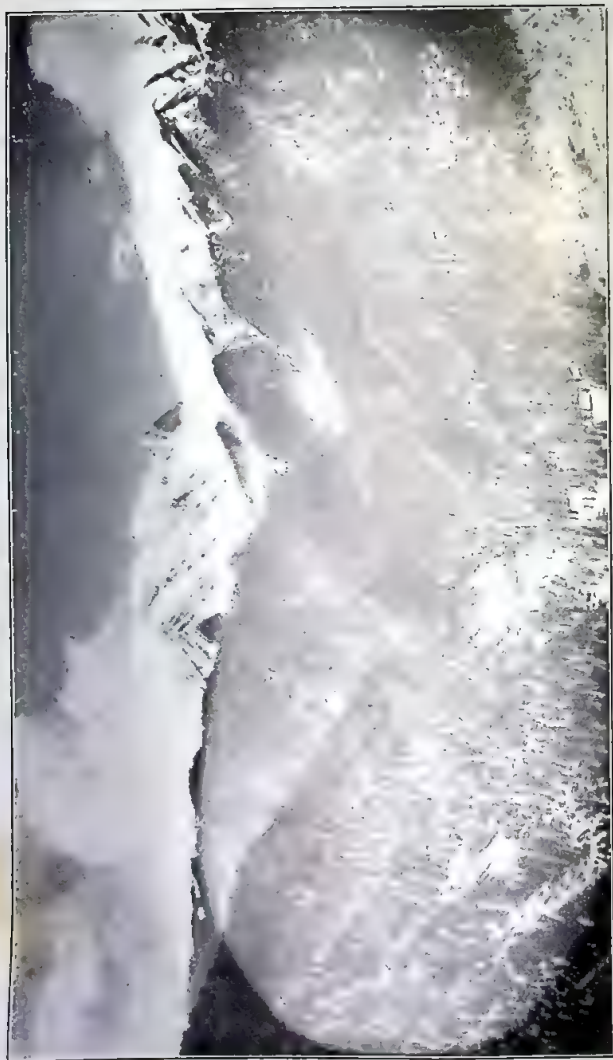
### 3. NINGLE NÁLLÁH

Ningle Nálláh is about 5 miles south-west of Gulmarg. The almost level route lying first along a marg road as far as the Dhobi Ghat, follows the normal path towards Rámpor. About half way and close to the path on its south side is a charming little tarn, known as the Blue Lagoon, tucked away on the fringe of the pine forest. This is a much favour-



TOMB OF BAPAM RESHI





*Photo by Mahatta & Co. Ltd., Srinagar*

VIEW OF FEROZPUR NALLAH FROM OUTER CIRCULAR ROAD

ed spot for picnic parties. Ningle Náálláh drains the southern slopes of Apharwat, accumulating its waters from snow-beds and springs from the vicinity of Ailapatör and after flowing along a long grassy valley enters a narrow ravine where its angry waters roar over a heavily bouldered bed which cuts through the picturesque pine forest. It is at a spot along a similar wild reach that the track meets it, providing many enchanting sites for picnics. Not many miles further down, the stream falls over precipitous ground before reaching the Vale and there helps to irrigate maize and rice fields before flowing to the river Jhelum (Vetasta) at a point about 2 miles above Sopor. The water of this stream is highly appreciated. Mahseer fishing can be had at the junction, where there are extensive willow plantations.

#### 4. LIEN MARG

The bridge over the Ningle Náálláh is crossed and the moderate ascent commenced. On the right some Gujar huts stand where milk and milk cakes can be obtained. The path continues through fine forests of pine and a succession of glades which vie with one another in beauty until the extensive Lien Marg is reached, with its sparkling stream. Before entering the Marg, a fine view of Apharwat as far as Ailapatör is seen. Many excellent camp sites can be used on these graceful grass-covered rolling downs. The Rámpor path leads away in a south-westerly direction. Should a more charming and extensive view be required, make the 1,000 ft. ascent to the summit of Woshatu (11,027) which overlooks this Marg.

## 5. FEROPOR NÁLLÁH

When approaching Tangamarg on the car drive up, the road climbs through land drained by fast flowing streamlets, which are branches of the Ferozpor Nálláh. Looking south from Tangamarg the valley can be traced up to its source close to the rugged peak, known as the Ferozpor Peak.

From Gulmarg visits to the Nálláh form many a delightful day's outing. It can be reached by two roads. The one along Tangamarg Road leads over the Gap to a point at Milestone 2 from Gulmarg, where the Ferozpor track leaves the main one, and curls round in its further descent until finally meeting the stream at a bridge. The pony track continues over the bridge but soon bifurcates along this right bank of the stream, the left arm leading to the Tosa Maidán while that to the right, maintaining its circuitous trend, strikes the old Gogaldára Road at a second bridge about 2 miles up stream and then leads away to the Ferozpor Pass, Poonch, and Kantar Nág.

The other route branches off the Outer Circular Walk at 'The Rosary' and follows the old well-defined Gogaldára Road. This road drops sharply towards the approaches to the Nálláh and so, under existing conditions, can be looked upon as a good bridle path.

Within a furlong of this bridge is a charming spot for encampment or picnic, which is now commonly known as Waters Meet, owing to the junction here of the Bahan and Ferozpor Nálláhs.

Good Trout fishing is obtainable along the preserved reaches of the Ferozpor Nálláh. The two beats are well stocked with Brown Trout and its fishing controlled under permit obtainable from the Game Warden in Srinagar. Dr. Ashraf's House forms the division between the two beats, that upstream commencing from the Nálláh junction at



Waters Meet, the lower extending to a bridge over the stream at Ferozpor village. Trout as large as a six pounder have been landed. Stray Rainbow Trout also may be caught. Snow Trout are said to abound along the upper reaches of this stream above the preserved waters.

From a seat near the stream, water birds of many varieties will be seen. The Brown Dipper flying low and swift over the surface will alight on a rock and curtsey in its peculiar way, and the common Sand-piper will bob its head and jerk its tail as it meanders along the sandy margin. Where the surging torrent foams with logs dashing round and round in its eddies and whirlpools, a small bird will be busily almost kissing the foamy surface, snatching up gnats. In size little smaller than a sparrow, Plumbeous Redstart sums up its plum-coloured plumage and flame-red tail; he will be accompanied by his dull brown-plumaged mate, easily recognized by the inverted brown triangle in an otherwise white tail seen as she alights, and continues to fan it open. Another bird of similar habits to be seen on the rocks in mid-stream is the white-capped Redstart, sporting a velvety black and chestnut suiting plus a snowy white crown. Wagtail of two species will run briskly along the margin or on moss-covered rocks in their search for food. Finally the strident but musical whistles of the Whistling Thrush will attract attention to its solidly built nest placed on an inaccessible ledge on the enormous boulder in mid stream.

A roam in the forest will reveal Balsam in diverse hues; the Chickory, Teasel, Geranium, St. John's Wort and many more varieties of the Mint family will be worthy of notice. The fragrance from the leaves of *Skimmia laureola*, Thyme, and *Mentha sylvestris* is delicious. The plant seen with the round red berry which has large deeply lobed leaves is *Podophylum emodi*. Dandelion and Dock grow everywhere.

## 6. BABAMARSHI (BÁPAM RESHI)

Baba Payam-ud-Din Reshi known as Bápam Reshi was a noted reshi or ascetic of the time of the Delhi Emperors and was born at Chandlo village in the Lar District. He was one of the courtiers of the ruling monarch of that time in Kashmir, and in consequence a man of means. The cause of his renunciation of the world is explained in the following anecdote:

While out riding one day, he observed ants gathering grain for the winter and working ceaselessly in the hot sun. Having dismounted he watched them closely until sundown. The scene so impressed him that he began to question himself as to the possible moral that could be drawn from the scene: 'Ants store for the winter, but what do I store for the journey to come?' The result was that he gave up his lucrative post and deserted his family in order to become a disciple of Zain-ud-Din, the noted Reshi of Aish Muqám. Having completed all stages of his spiritual studies, in accordance with the dictates of his preceptor, he took up his abode at the village of Ranboh, in Bangil District. This place was well tucked away in the pines and formed a most secluded nook for a recluse, where birds sang and flowers scattered fragrance. The place was haunted by dginns, but the force of his prayers drove them away and he lived on in solitude in order to raise his soul to higher planes.

At the time he deserted his family, his wife was about to become a mother and in due course a son was born. When this son grew up, he went in search of his father and eventually arrived at this village. The father seeing his son became highly elated and kept him by his side. After a period the father advised his son to sit in seclusion, but the lad failed and instead associated with bad companions. When the Reshi heard of this, he prayed to God saying, 'If it is

A

B

C



PANORAMA FROM ABOVE KHELLAN MARG

*Photo by Mahatta & Co. Ltd., Srinagar*

A

NANGA PARBAT: 26,660 feet  
(85 miles)

B

HARMOUKH: 16,890 feet  
(42 miles)

C

KOLAHOI: 17,779 feet  
(57 miles)





true, let him die'. The angel of death snatched away the boy immediately. Bápam Reshi died in 1480 A.D. (890 Hijri) and was buried in the village of Ranboh at the foot of the slopes below Gulmarg.

The grave of the Saint is beautifully enclosed with lattice-work shutters and surrounded by a verandah artistically furnished with carved deodar planks and pillars; an embroidered cloth covers the grave and similar trappings hang over the shutters, beautifying the place. Visitors to the Ziarat should remove their shoes before entering the shrine.

Pilgrims or devotees tie a piece of string round the grave as a vow to offer a sacrifice should their wishes be fulfilled; half these offerings are given to the reshis, or inmates of the Ziarat, the other half freely distributed amongst visitors. When a woman visits the Ziarat in the hope that her wish for the gift of a child may be granted, she ties a piece of ribbon from her plaited hair to the latticed window; should this wish be granted, she either must hand over the child to the service of the Ziarat or allow a tuft of hair to grow on the child's head and not be touched until it is shaved off at the Ziarat on the day the thanksgiving offerings are made. It costs the parents a large sum of money to be permitted to take the child back. It is in this manner that the population of this village has considerably increased.

There is a large building to house the reshi and a number of outhouses to accommodate the pilgrims to the shrine. Accommodation is provided for Hindus also. The shrine is revered throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir.

Babamarshi is about 3 miles from the commencement of the bridle-path which branches off the circular road in the vicinity of the Bázár area; the gradients are fairly easy by this route. The alternative steep footpath is more direct and zigzags down the mountain side from the Leopard's Valley end of Gulmarg; this track may be suitable for the walk down.

Many delightful picnic sites are available under the pines, but should a visit to a lovely waterfall, where the Ningle Nálláh tumbles down into the Vale, be contemplated, it is recommended that the remaining 3 miles be covered and lunch taken there, where an added attraction, a pleasant bath in a quiet pool, can be enjoyed.

## 7. KANTAR NÁG

(Duration of trip 3 days)

Kantar Nág is a lake on the top of a mountain at a height of 13,250 feet.

*1st Day.* Start early and take the Ferozpor Nálláh route, across the stream near Hapat Zabal and ascend the Pándan spur until reaching above the forest-limit. Camp at Nágrád Marg. There is a shepherd's hut there. The view is magnificent.

*2nd Day.* Ascend Nashukri Bal. Keep to the right along the almost level Poonch Road; a naked peak will now come into view, and before reaching the pass turn right and ascend some 600 ft. along the stream to its source. This is Kantar Nág. Continue across the Nashukri-hund Maidán, ford the Bona-bal, then ascend to the southern slopes of Aphaawat. A camping ground can be found near two shepherd's huts there.

*3rd Day.* Return to Gulmarg via Khellan Marg. No fuel is available until Khellan Marg is reached.

## 8. TOSA MAIDÁN

(Duration of trip 5 days)

*1st Day.* Along the Ferozpor Nálláh track and after crossing the bridge ascend along the beautiful forest pony track and camp at Danwas.



*2nd Day.* Danwas to Pehijan. The path is almost level but undulating with moderate ascents and descents. Camp at Pehijan.

*3rd Day.* Tosa Maidán is reached and will be seen to be one of the most beautiful pasture lands in the country.

*4th Day.* Return to camp at Danwas.

*5th Day.* Danwas to Gulmarg.

An alternative return route suggested runs via the villages, a descent to Khág, thence along the borders of Poshkar hillock (8,337 ft.) to Ferozpor and Tangamarg.

The routes leading from Tosa Maidán to Srinagar are as follows:

(a) Tosa Maidán to Mágam (16 miles); Mágam to Srinagar (14 miles).

(b) Tosa Maidán to Rayar via Rangazabal (10 miles).  
Rayar to Nila Nág (12 miles).

Nila Nág to Srinagar via Vahathor (21 miles).

## APPENDIX

### KANTAR NÁG

There is no dearth of high altitude lakes in the Kashmir Himálayas. These gems of Nature are clasped tightly by high mountain peaks and meadows. Now and then they are visited by lovers of Nature to whom their very sight gives joy ineffable. Almost all of them are dedicated to some god or goddess and are held in great reverence. The shepherds who live with their flocks in their vicinity during summer months offer sacrifices every year to the presiding deity on their first visit.

One of these blooming eyes of Nature is Kantar Nág, the name being a corruption of Nila Kanṭh (blue throat) Nág

denoting an aspect of Shiva which represents him as blue-throated. One of the affluents of the Ferozpor stream rising from Bonabal Lake (now silted by debris) joining a mountain torrent formed by rills which come from the flanks of Apharwat and Handibál mountains, separates it from Apharwat.

From Tangamarg we crossed over to Thambarháma through the bed of the Ferozpor Stream which works havoc during flood, changing its course, and depositing boulders over large areas. The width of the bed is about three miles. At this village we had a friend Pt. Amar Chand, a shopkeeper who very kindly arranged things for us. The villagers expressed unwillingness to go to the lake, saying that no one could go there by design. They were busy making hay which they stacked on trees. The willow, the mulberry, the walnut, the pear and the apple were the principal trees round the village. Two pairs of king crows with jet-black coats and forked tail and some European rollers were on the wing. The mynas and the jungle crows were busy eating apples.

We engaged a coolie and the writer and Pt. Gopi Nath one of his cousins started early in the morning on August 25. We passed through the maize fields and came out on the path which runs through the middle of the forest among 5 needled pines and deodar trees. We heard the hoarse coo of the turtle-dove and the noise of the yellow-billed magpie from the trees. The common flowers about the road-side were the *Senecio* with pinnately lobed leaves and *Impatiens Edgeworthii* of yellow colour. It was a delightful morning walk under shady pines imparting a sweet fragrance to the air. The path crosses the Reserved area of the forest where the herbage is very luxuriant, and the greenish-white flowers of *Phytolacca acinosa* (kafal) standing at the top of the stems in an erect raceme are common. Also the *Geranium Wallichianum* and the *Stellaria bulbosa* have carved in their

own beds. The path then creeps on to the Tosa Maidán path which comes from Gulmarg. We emerged at Ranga Marg and Zeta Pather where we turned to the right and had a good view of Drang village and its maize fields with a silvery stream draining it. The path now goes high over the right bank of the Ferozpor stream flanked by dead nettle, calamintha and artemisa till we come to the bridge which crosses the river at Goirwán.

Goirwán is the corrupt form of Gauri wan (Gauri's forest). Here we waited for some time to make sure of our way as the path bifurcated here. While watching the river, water being very low, I saw a female<sup>1</sup> plumbeous redstart entering a hole among stones in the pier of the bridge. When returning, we sat at the same spot to take rest, and observed a male<sup>2</sup> plumbeous redstart entering the nest with some quarry in his beak. Examining the hole, we found out three fledgelings with white beaks and black downs in a nest made of pine needles inlaid with feathers. It was August 26th. The brown dipper, the whistling thrush and the yellow headed wagtail were skimming along the torrent. For an hour no man passed by. At last a Gujar gave us a half clue of the place. We recrossed the bridge and kept to the right bank of the stream. We crossed to the left bank below Hapat Zabal which is an upland on the slope of the mountain shaded by pines and spruce. Alderberry and dock were common. Cows and buffaloes were grazing round two Gujar huts. There was also the shed of a *doomb*<sup>3</sup> who takes the cattle of villagers to graze in summer just as shepherds do to the sheep. There is a torrent flowing down the mountain and emptying itself into the main stream from the left bank. It rises from the southern spur of Apharwat and Nashukrihund maidan and also from Bonabal Lake

<sup>1</sup> It has a white tail.      <sup>2</sup> It has a red tail.      <sup>3</sup> Cow-boy.



which has been silted with debris and does not exist now. Further on there is a tiny rill making a delightful fall not very far from the remains of an avalanche from which water still trickled into the stream on either bank, forming huge blocks of snow. Early in the year it must have spanned the stream and served as a bridge. The spur of the Pándon Marg over which the route passes, divides the headwater of the Ferozpor stream into two tributaries. The volume of the water of the tributary on the left is greater than that on the right which flows from the springs of the Nágrád Marg (the meadow of springs). We ascended the spur covered with spruce, the limit of tree-belt, and emerged into an undulating marg. It was exclusively covered with *Euphobia Wallichii* and *Aconitum chasmanthum*. The former herb is said to be one of the ingredients for turning base metals into gold and the tubers of the latter crushed and pounded with sesamum oil is rubbed into a rheumatic limb with good results. The flowers of the latter are pounded and mixed with sugar of twice the weight. The mixture is then bottled and exposed to the sun for forty<sup>1</sup> days to form a tonic, the dose of which is as large as a pea. A nutritious diet is advisable when a course of this tonic is taken. We did not see any birch tree, but there were juniper bushes.

We came across three shepherd sheds. One of the shepherds had already left, and two others were there with their flock. We entered into conversation with one of them who, listening to our story asked us to see the other shepherd who lived in Nágarád Marg where we crossed over. He received us kindly and took us for government officials. We opened our rucksack and presented to him a cucumber and

<sup>1</sup> 40 appears to be a mystic number. Christ fasted for 40 days. Certain courses of treatment last for 40 days. Penances are observed for 40 days. Vows, to gain a desired object are kept for 40 days.

some apples. We related to him our mission and asked him whether he could guide us to the lake. One of the shepherds agreed, but said that they were leaving the next day, for the lower meadows. They could not stay behind because they dreaded the robbers from Punch who steal their sheep whenever they get a chance. The route to Punch passes through these meadows.

They led us to the shed and spread some spruce needles to make us comfortable. They provided, too, some juniper wood and a little milk. The shepherd sheds are made of stone walls without plaster, the flat roof being covered with pine logs and twigs plastered with mud. At sundown the flock assembles near the shed between two platforms on which two men keep a night vigil. With all such vigilance, when a shower of rain drives them in, they lose eight or nine sheep. The brigandage of which these poor people are the victims needs to be stamped out.

A glorious morning! The whole eastern labyrinth of mountains joined on to the rampart where the Nangá Parbat (26,660 ft.) stood like a white elephant ridden by an angel in white attire. The impressive peak of Harmoukh points towards Gwashibrör (Kolahoi) while in the eastern corner rose Nun Khun the giant of the Himálayas. The valley lay a unique carpet chequered in green, blue and yellow; closeby projected mountain spurs clothed with coniferous trees with glades resembling jewels set on rings. Such a scene bewitches the mind and baffles the pen.

We hurried through our tea and packed our baggage. No guide available. The shepherd gave us directions as to the route. We started. It so happened that a shepherd who had lost seven sheep offered to be our guide for half the way for some *bakhsish*, as he was going in search of his sheep. We agreed. The path crept in zigzags over the Handibal (Lettuce mountain) from 11,000 ft. to 12,000 ft.

in about two miles. There were patches of juniper bushes out of which flew away chukors, meadow-buntings and short wings. It took us about two hours to reach the top, from where the going was fairly easy, circuiting the mountain slope which was covered with *Polygonum amplexicaule*, *Edelweiss*<sup>1</sup> and *Swertia*. We were now in the valley of Nashukrihund Maidan (the plain of ingratitude) and we could see the top which harbours the Kantar Nag. The shepherd now agreed to come to the lake. We stood on the Punch route and had now to turn right and climb about 400 ft. On our left was the isolated craggy peak of Nashukrihund Bal, like the horn of an antelope, and a flat base called Nashukrihund Añgun. (The compound of ingratitude). It is said that a third of the belongings of all those who show their ingratitude to the Almighty for what they have, is turned into husk or bran which accumulates in the compound of Nashukrihund Bal<sup>2</sup> (the mountain of ingratitude). The peak is also known as Hangal Heng (15,000 ft.). In front of us was the pass and the boundary line between Kashmir and Punch. We turned to the right and climbed a grassy slope. Next came a shaly bit of the path at the end of which we found ourselves on the shore of the lake.

This lake is almost at the top of a mountain about 13,250 feet above the sea-level. So, I assume it to be the highest lake in the Kashmir Himálayas. It is circular in shape and has diameter of about 200 ft. It is like the crater of a volcano. Towards the farther end the weather-beaten rocks turned into debris, and scree must be filling the lake year by year

<sup>1</sup> *Edelweiss* (*Anaphalis nubigena*?) are of 3 kinds.

(1) Having star-like flowers.

(2) Having yellow disc-shaped flowers of ashy rays.

(3) Without disc.

<sup>2</sup> The only peak round Gulmarg worth scaling.

reducing its dimensions. There was a small bit of snow left in the snow-bed on one of its sides. It is exactly to the south of Apharwat and must be of the same height. It is higher than Ailapathör lake. We undressed and bathed in the lake. It refreshed our physical frames and toned up our minds. But the mind is tranquillised amid a scene replete with peace and solitude. The tongue has nothing to utter while the mind gets absorbed in Divine Glory of which man is part and parcel. And God said, 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness.'

The people living round about the lake have a great dread of it. They say that if any impure thing is thrown inside the lake, it rains hard till the lake throws it out. Another story goes that the lake was situated right below in the valley. Many people died owing to the disrespect shown by them to the lake. So, a saint Gana<sup>1</sup> Baba Sahib drove it away right to the top of the mountain out of the sight of the people. Hence few go there.

There is a route from the lake to Gulmarg. It would take about five or six hours to negotiate. It follows the descent from the lake to Bonabal Nág (which is now silted up) then ascending Trájan to the southern spur of Apharwat where shepherd sheds are. From Trájan it climbs to the top of Apharwat Alats<sup>2</sup> Mar (abode of laziness) a route from here shoots off to Ailapathör, thence it leads to Kongdor (Saffron bed) and on to Gulmarg.

About 10 a.m. we started back by the same route and found the shepherd shed at Nágarád Marg vacant. We cooked our food, juniper wood being available. It rained during

<sup>1</sup> Gana Baba Sahib was a Mahomedan saint who is said to have built 360 bridges, 360 mosques, 360 springs and 360 ghats. He was looked after by a pandit family of Kárahama where his Ziarat is.

<sup>2</sup> Every traveller throws a stone over his shoulders to drive away fatigue. A good psychological tip to invite courage.



the time we were in. We had a hasty meal and left at about 1 p.m. At Goirwan we crossed over to the left bank of the stream and followed the path which was lower down densely covered with the bushes and herbs of the Labiate (mint) family. It is not a pony track. We recrossed just above Drang where the path ran between maize fields and shingle-roofed houses. Very few plants had two cobs. Of course, there was plenty of beans which are generally sown along with maize in this part of the valley. Every field was marked off by a stone wall. Among the grasses which bordered on the fields were some flowers of beauty such as St. John's Wort, chicory, milfoil, balsam, wild hollyhock (*Lavatera Kashmiriana*). These grasses are mowed and made into sheaves or twisted into thick long ropes and turned into hay which is stacked on willow, mulberry or apple trees outside the village and is the chief winter fodder for cattle. We passed a beautiful spot called Nayak<sup>1</sup> Sahib among pines on the bank of the river, a nice camping site.

The sun set. We took a short cut. We had to walk across streamlets and walk over their beds mainly covered with round boulders covering about 4 miles. The only light was the white surface of the stones and many a time we stumbled and sprawled. At about 1 a.m. we arrived at our base. Our friend had become very anxious. The villagers men and women reproached him for allowing us to go to such an out of the way place. He was relieved when he saw us. We described to him the beauty of Nature stored in the lake.

<sup>1</sup> Nayak Sahib is the corrupt form of Vanāyak a form of Ganish the satellite of Shiva. In the Lidder Valley before we enter Pahalgam we find Ganish installed on the bank of the river. In the Sind Valley we again find a spot dedicated to Ganish near Gaganagir.

## **Synopsis of the trek**

It can be done at the least in one day, and at the most in three days.

Ferozpor to Hapat Zabal about 6 miles.

Hapat Zabal to Nagrad Marg, ascent over Pandan spur about three miles, camp at Nágrád Marg (shepherd hut, juniper wood available).

Nágrád Marg to the top of Handi Bal, an ascent of about 2 miles from 10,000 to 12,000 ft. top of Handi Bal, an easy walk to the last climb of about 500 yards to the edge of the lake about 1 mile.

## **Return to Gulmarg**

Lake to Trajan via Nashukrihund Maidan about two miles.

Trajan to Alats Mar top of Apharwat, about two miles, descent and ascent.

Alats Mar either via Ailapathör or direct to Gulmarg (descent) about 8 miles.

It is possible to do the trek in two days.

An energetic man can do it from Gulmarg in one day by pony but this may be tiring.

# Synopsis of the work

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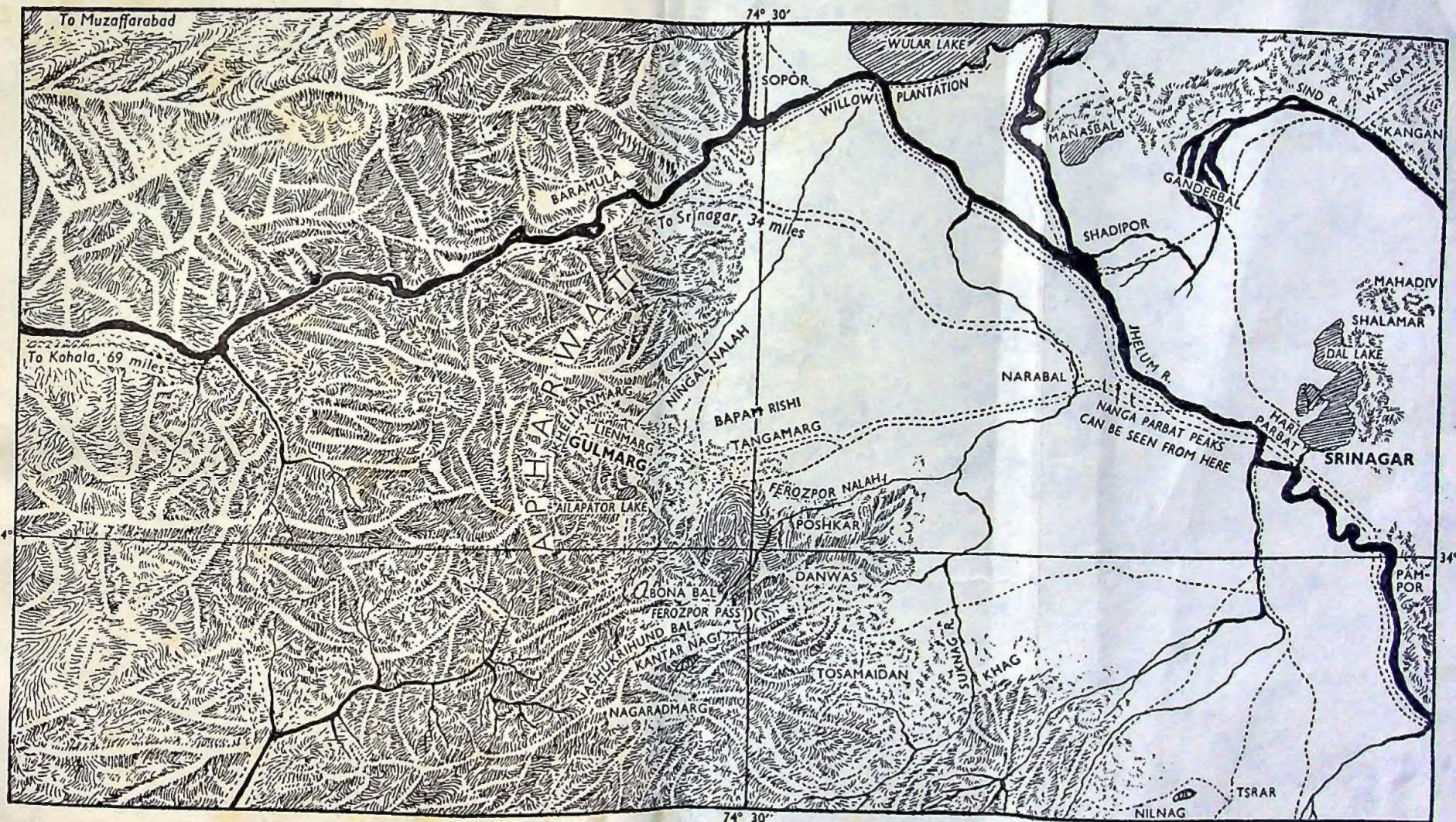
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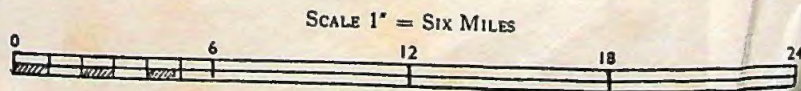
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Drawn by Mohan Lal Raina

## GULMARG AND ITS ENVIRONS



- |                |   |   |  |
|----------------|---|---|--|
| RIVERS         | - | - |  |
| LAKES          | - | - |  |
| RANGES         | - | - |  |
| METALLED ROADS | - | - |  |
| PONY TRACK     | - | - |  |
| PASSES         | - | - |  |

Gulmarg (8,500 ft.)  
 Khellan Marg (11,000 ft.)  
 Lienmarg (11,200 ft.)  
 Tangmarg (7,400 ft.)  
 Ailapator Lake (12,600 ft.)

Kantar Nag (13,250 ft.)  
 Poshkar (8,337 ft.)  
 Nashukrihund Bal (15,000 ft.)  
 Nashukrihund Maidan (12,000 ft.)  
 Mahadiv (13,013 ft.)